



Art Professor Jon Keenan Selected as Fulbright Scholar at Japan's Kyoto Seika University

Professor of Fine and Performing Arts at Colby-Sawyer College Jon Keenan is visiting Japan this spring as a Fulbright scholar in art and anthropology at Kyoto Seika University. Professor Keenan, an internationally known ceramic artist and educator who resides in Elkins, N.H., will serve as a visiting artist, scholar and teacher, as well as a representative of the United States.

The Fulbright Program is the U.S. government's flagship international educational exchange program. Administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, the program seeks to increase mutual understanding between the citizens of the United States and those of other countries.

Professor Keenan, who joined Colby-Sawyer in 1990, is an expert in ceramic history, studio ceramics, East Asian art history, and Japanese art, language and culture. He earned a Master of Fine Arts in art history and ceramics at the Kyoto University of Fine Arts Graduate School and has studied and exhibited his work in Kyoto, Japan's cultural center, many times over the years.

As part of the Fulbright Senior Specialists Program, Professor Keenan will teach classes in ceramics, Japanese art history and anthropology to graduate and undergraduate students at Kyoto Seika University. His lectures will focus on ceramic art, its history and contemporary practice in the United States and in Japan, and he will provide



demonstrations of his research and creative work.

Professor Keenan was first exposed to the art and craft of clay as a boy living in New Delhi, India. Village Sikh potters from outside the capital visited his school to demonstrate their throwing abilities using primitive hand-powered wooden wheels.

"As a Fulbrighter, Professor Keenan joins the ranks of distinguished scholars and professionals worldwide who are leaders in the educational, political, economic, social and cultural lives of their countries," says Sabine O'Hara, executive director for the Council of International Exchange of Scholars. "It is our expectation that as a representative of the United States, Professor Keenan will demonstrate the qualities of excellence and leadership that have been the hallmarks of this respected academic exchange program founded in 1946 by the U.S. government."

Professor Keenan is the third Colby-Sawyer faculty member to receive the prestigious Fulbright award. In 2007, John H. Callewaert, former director of the Institute for Community and Environment, received a Fulbright grant to teach at the Hanoi College of Natural Sciences in Vietnam, and Joseph C. Carroll, professor of Social Sciences and Education, studied in Eastern Europe in 1992 through a Fulbright scholarship.

Deborah Taylor, academic vice president and dean of faculty at Colby-Sawyer, says the Fulbright award is an important recognition that honors Professor Keenan's leadership and talent as an artist and educator. "It's also an honor for Colby-Sawyer College to have our faculty receive these awards," she says.

Professor Keenan expressed enthusiasm about this opportunity to return to the ancient city of Kyoto to teach and conduct research. "This category of Fulbright—the senior specialist—draws on experts to teach in their discipline in a foreign country," he says. "The arrangement is ideal since I'm intimately familiar with the art and culture of Japan. I'm very grateful to the Fulbright Program and Colby-Sawyer College for their support of my work."

The ceramic arts are central to Japanese culture, a tradition that extends back to 10,000 B.C., making it the oldest ceramic heritage in the world. Many regions of Japan have their own unique ceramic practices, with thousands of kilns devoted to specific styles. Kyoto, the ancient home of Japan's imperial family, has a rich and diverse ceramic tradition, which Professor Keenan is exploring with his students in the classroom and through field trips to visit artists and temples in the city and surrounding villages.

Professor Keenan is also pursuing his research interests in Japanese art history, investigating the role of Buddhist patronage of the arts, past and present, in Kyoto, and the ways in which Buddhist traditions have found expression in Japanese arts. He is also continuing his research into green technologies and studio practices in ceramics, and will bring his findings back to Colby-Sawyer to share with his students in the classroom and the studio.

"My experiences in Japan will inform my teaching at Colby-Sawyer in a direct and significant way and keep me current in my field," says Professor Keenan. "I also hope to build on Colby-Sawyer's relationships in Asia and establish connections that could lead to academic exchanges for our students and faculty. I feel the college is perfectly poised to expand its international educational exchanges into this part of Asia."

Professor Keenan also looks forward to collaborating and sharing ideas with his colleagues at



Round Form I, Natural glaze, Anagama Wood-Fired Stoneware Ceramics, 2008.

Kyoto Seika University, and to making new works in the university's ceramics studio. His work concentrates on anagama wood-fired pottery, made of and inspired by nature.

"My ceramics are both functional and sculptural, echoing the interaction between nature, culture and the experience of everyday life," he explains. "I mix my own glazes and clays with natural materials, which contain the subtle

hues of nature itself. I'm attracted to the spontaneous and expressive qualities achieved through firing in an anagama semi-subterranean wood-fired kiln. It allows me to explore the expressive possibilities of porcelain and stoneware provides for unlimited opportunities to communicate subtle and nuanced ideas."

Professor Keenan served as a visiting research professor of art and associate director of the Craft Campus at the University of North Carolina-Asheville in 2007-2008. As part of a yearlong sabbatical in 2005-2006, he conducted research as a visiting professor at the Exotic Materials Institute, part of the University of California-Los Angeles Department of Chemistry.

Professor Keenan's ceramic work is currently on display at the John Molloy Gallery in New York City. He has exhibited his work widely in the United States and Japan and guest-lectured and exhibited at many institutions including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Hampshire College, the University of Maine, the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Federal University of Brazil in Natal, the University of Leeds in England, and in New Hampshire, at Dartmouth College, Holderness School and the University of New Hampshire. He has also received grants in support of his work from the National Endowment for the Arts, New England Foundation for the Arts and the New Hampshire Council on the Arts.